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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Eighteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 454th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 18 May 1998, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. KOLOSOV

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the eighteenth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

2. Ms. KLEIN-BIDMON (Representative of the Secretary-General) extended a warm welcome to the Committee at the beginning of its eighteenth session and announced that Ms. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, would hold an exchange of views with its members on Friday, 29 May, at 10 a.m. Everyone was aware that 1998 was an important year for human rights, because the international community would be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since the Committee's January session, when the High Commissioner in her opening address had stressed that the protection of children must be central to the commemorative activities, children had been the focus of priority attention in various forums. For example, an information kit on the rights of the child had been published jointly by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund as a contribution to the fiftieth anniversary.

3. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission on Human Rights had devoted particular attention to the question of the rights of the child. In its resolution 1998/76, it had recommended inter alia that, within their mandates, all relevant human rights mechanisms and organs of the United Nations and the supervisory bodies of the specialized agencies should pay attention to particular situations in which children were in danger and where their rights were being violated, and that they should take into account the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Commission had also underlined the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes relating to children. It had further noted the support given to the Committee by the Plan of Action team. The resolution had also mentioned the two draft optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to the involvement of children in armed conflicts and the sale of children, child-prostitution and child pornography. The Commission had invited Committee members to send comments on both protocols and consider the possibility of being represented at the forthcoming sessions of the working groups. The Commission had likewise adopted a resolution on the abduction of children from northern Uganda (resolution 1998/75), in which it had concurred with the Committee's comments on the participation of children in the conflict in northern Uganda and, in particular, with the recommendation on measures to stop the killing and abduction of children and their use as soldiers. It had also requested the relevant United Nations bodies to address that situation as a matter of priority.

4. During the same session, the Commission had adopted other resolutions on the rights of the child, including those on the traffic in women and girls, and human rights in the administration of justice, in particular of children and juveniles in detention. It had emphasized the need to reinforce the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, and had decided to establish new mandates, including those of a special rapporteur on the right to education, a special rapporteur on the effects of foreign debt, and an

independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty. The Commission had also adopted a draft declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

5. In its resolution 1998/27, the Commission had welcomed the reports of the 7th and 8th meetings of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and the holding of their 9th meeting, and had taken note of their conclusions and recommendations. During the 9th meeting, the chairpersons had recommended that the Committee should consider all measures designed to limit the number of reservations to human rights treaties and avoid the adoption of rules which would provide an incentive to States parties to delay the submission of their reports. In their recommendations to the General Assembly, they had supported the practice followed by some bodies of examining the implementation of the relevant convention in a country even in the absence of a report, once all other alternatives had been exhausted. Lastly, the chairpersons had encouraged treaty bodies to refer to general comments made by other bodies in order to promote a dialogue with them.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/74)

6. The provisional agenda (CRC/C/74) was adopted.

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 3)

7. Ms. RAADI-AZARAKHCHI (Secretary of the Committee) said that since its seventeenth session, the Committee had received the initial reports of Georgia, Suriname, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kyrgyzstan, Djibouti, the Marshall Islands, Burundi, the Comoros, Slovakia, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom on the Isle of Man, the Central African Republic and Lesotho. However, the Committee had still not received a reply from the Democratic Republic of the Congo about any changes it might wish to make to its report (which had been drafted by the previous regime), especially with regard to terminology, as the report referred to Zaire and not to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Committee had also received two new periodic reports (from Costa Rica and Peru), which had brought the total number of reports received to 125 initial and 9 periodic reports.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.